CLAIMS

1.   A method for providing a user with information on a subject depending on the user asking subject related questions to a computer system, the method comprising the steps of:

(a)   retrieving, by a computer system, study materials of the subject stored in the system;

(b)   presenting, by the system, the study materials to a user;

(c)   retrieving, by the system, a subject related question entered into the system by the user;

(d)   generating, by the system, an answer to the question;

(e)   presenting, by the system, the answer to the user; and

(f)   repeating, by the system, at least the steps of retrieving (c), generating (d) and presenting (e), so as to answer another question entered by the user on the subject.

2.   A server computer that couples to a network and serves to provide users of client computers also connected to the network with information on subjects, said server computer being configured to:

(a)   retrieve study materials of the subject stored on the network;

(b)   present the study materials to a user;

(c)   retrieve a subject related question entered into a client computer by the user;

(d)   generate an answer to the question;

(e)   present the answer to the user; and

(f)   repeat at least the retrieve (c), generate (d) and present (e), so as to answer another question entered by the user on the subject.

3.   A method for providing a user with information on a subject depending on the user asking subject related questions to a computer system, the method comprising the steps of:

(a)   retrieving, by a computer system, study materials of the subject stored in the system;

(b)   presenting, by the system, the study materials to a user;

(c)   retrieving, by the system, a subject related question entered into the system by the user;

(d)   generating, by the system, an answer to the question;

(e)   presenting, by the system, the answer to the user; and

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(f)   optionally repeating, by the system, the steps of retrieving, generating and presenting, so as to answer another question entered by the user on the subject.

4.   A server computer that couples to a network and serves to provide users of client computers also connected to the network with information on subjects, said server computer being configured to:

    (a)   retrieve study materials of the subject stored on the network;

    (b)   present the study materials to a user;

    (c)   retrieve a first subject related question entered into a client computer by the user;

    (d)   generate an answer to the question;

    (e)   present the answer to the user; and

    wherein if the user enters a second subject related question into the client computer, repeat at least the retrieve (c), generate (d) and present (e), so as to answer the user's second question.

5.   A computer-implemented method for providing a user with information on a subject, said method comprising:

    retrieving information on the subject for the user to learn about the subject;

    presenting the information to the user;

    determining at least one response associated with the subject that is related to a natural-language initial question asked by the user requesting information on the subject;

    receiving a selection of a response from the user; and

    forwarding information associated with the selected response to the user, thereby further providing the user with information on the subject.

6.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 5, wherein said method uses semantic and grammatical processing.

7.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 5, wherein said computer-implemented method is performed by a first computer, and wherein the initial question is asked by the user from a second computer, the second computer coupleable to first computer through a network.

8.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

9.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 7, wherein the information forwarded to the user is an answer to the selected one of the plurality of responses.

10.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein the plurality of responses are stored in a database.

11.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein said determining of the plurality of responses associated with the subject operates to identify the plurality of responses from a large pool of predetermined responses.

12.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein said method further comprises:

forwarding, after said determining and prior to said receiving, the plurality of responses to the user for the selection of one of the plurality of responses.

13.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 6, wherein the plurality of responses are natural language questions.

14.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 5, wherein said determining comprises:

comparing at least a component in the initial question to numerous components stored in a database to produce comparison information; and

selecting the plurality of responses based on the comparison information.

15.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

determining whether the initial question is ambiguous; and

resolving the ambiguity if the initial question is ambiguous.

16.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 15, wherein said method uses semantic and grammatical processing.

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17.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 15,

wherein said determining whether the initial question is ambiguous operates to identify a word in the initial question that is ambiguous due to its spelling, and

5   wherein said resolving operates to resolve the ambiguity in the initial question by at least replacing the word with another word having a correct spelling.

18.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

10   determining whether clarification of the initial natural language question about a subject from the user is needed; and

prompting the user to clarify the initial natural language question when clarification of the natural language question is determined to be needed.

15   19.   A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 18,

wherein said method is performed by a first computer, which is coupleable through a network to a second computer, where the initial question is entered, and

wherein said method uses semantic and grammatical processing.

20   20.   A computer-implemented method for providing a user with information, said method comprising:

sending informational materials from a server system to a client system via the Internet so as to inform a user of the client system about a subject;

subsequently receiving, at the server system, a request to respond to a natural-

25   language question asked by the user, the natural language question being asked by the user at the client system, and the natural language question being associated with the subject;

determining, at the server system, a response to the natural-language question, said determining operating to at least analyze the natural-language question using at least grammatical processing; and

30   sending the response to the natural-language question from the server system to the client system via the Internet;

wherein the subject relates to a product that the user is interested in.

21. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein said method further comprises:

identifying additional informational materials related to the natural-language question; and

5   sending the additional informational materials from the server system to the client system via the Internet.

22. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 21, wherein said sending of the additional informational materials is performed when requested by the user.

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23. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 21, wherein said sending of the additional informational materials is automatically performed substantially simultaneous with said sending of the response.

15   24. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein the grammatical and semantic processing uses at least one grammatical rule and at least one semantic rule.

25. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein said method further comprises:

20   determining whether clarification of the natural language question is desirable; and

prompting the user to clarify the natural language question when clarification of the natural language question is determined to be desirable.

26. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein the response is an

25   answer to the natural-language question.

27. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein said determining operates to transform at least a portion of the natural-language question into at least one instruction.

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28. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 27, wherein the server system has an information database coupled thereto, and wherein the instruction is a query for the database.

29. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein said determining is independent of at least one word in the natural-language question, and the response depends on a correct spelling of at least one misspelled word in the natural-language question.

5 30. A computer-implemented method as recited in claim 20, wherein the server system keeps track of a unique identifier of the user.